

Response

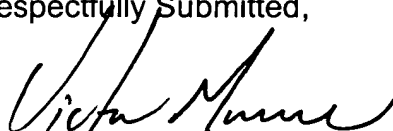
Applicant appreciates the Examiner's indication in the Office Action dated 01/30/2004 that claims 15 through 18 would be allowable if re-written in independent form. Accordingly, independent claims 14 and 21 now include the limitations previously recited in claims 15 and 17, respectively. Since independent claims 15 and 18 are now in a condition for allowance, so too should the respective dependent claims (namely, 16 and 18).

All rejected claims have been canceled or rewritten to incorporate allowable subject matter. While Applicant has elected to accept the allowed subject matter, please do not misconstrue such acceptance as an acquiescence to the merits of the rejections. Instead, this amendment merely marks a business decision to obtain patent protection on the allowed subject matter without further prosecution. Applicant traverses such rejections and reserves all rights and arguments.

The amendments are fully supported by the specification, claims, and figures as originally filed. No new matter is believed or intended to be involved.

Based on the foregoing, all pending claims are in a condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and an early notice of allowance.

Respectfully Submitted,



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